

# New bill would ease weapons restrictions to expand deer hunting in county

BY TITUS LEDBETTER III  
STAFF WRITER

A new bill under consideration by the County Council would reduce deer hunting restrictions and make it easier to hunt deer in the county.

There are a number of concerns raised by the growing deer population, including significant crop loss sustained by county farmers.

The proposed legislation, sponsored

by Councilman Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown and recommended by the county's deer management work group, would lift current restriction on firing a gun within 100 yards of a public road. The restriction on firing a gun from, on or across a road would remain.

In addition, the proposed legislation would reduce the distance restrictions from homes or campgrounds for firing a weapon. Current-

ly hunters must be at least 200 yards away before discharging a weapon. The new restriction would be 150 yards.

The new changes would also allow deer hunting on private property of at least 50 acres.

"The intent of the bill is to provide greater flexibility for people to manage their property for deer management," said Jeremy Criss, the county's agriculture service manager. "It has been a growing problem in the county."

During a public hearing on the bill on Jan. 24, county officials heard testimony from farmers and residents. Many residents spoke about their concerns that the deer population has contributed greatly to the county's high rate of lime disease, Criss said.

Farmers complained about devastating effects the deer have had on the crops citing that one deer can consume 2,000 pounds of grain, Criss said.